

THE TURKISH CENSORSHIP.

HOW THE BIBLE MUST BE EDITED.

Current reports of the espionage of the mails which is exercised by the Turkish Government to educe little surprise, in view of the practices which have for some time marked the censorship at Constantinople. Indeed the Sublime Porte does not lag far behind the Russian Czar in the intolerance with which it regards all written or printed matter not in exact accord with its own notions. Only a few weeks ago the restrictions placed upon the publication of the Bible in Turkey were made so oppressive as to call forth an official remonstrance from Sir Clare Ford, the British Ambassador.

According to a correspondent of "The London Daily News," the first cause of complaint related to the hindrances placed in the way of the circulation of the Bible generally. Though liberty of religious teaching is guaranteed under several treaties and firmans, and though the Bible has been sanctioned as a book which may be circulated, it continually happens that a provincial officer seizes the stock of any person who is found selling the sacred book. This, therefore, is an old grievance, which has now to be remedied. The suppression is an illegal act due usually to the fanaticism of the provincial officer, and cannot be defended.

The proposed changes and suppressions in the Bible mark a new departure. Probably they are due to the zeal of one or two small functionaries in the capital who have been notorious during the past few years for their hostility to everything Christian, and if Sir Clare Ford's action in the matter should lead to the removal of these men to posts where their zeal could be turned in other directions the Porte would be the gainer. They are probably the same men who objected to the words "Thy Kingdom come" on the ground that the Empire is good enough for the subjects of His Majesty, and only consented to allow the phrase to stand on being solemnly assured that when Christians repeat the phrase they do not imply any derogation from the sovereign rights of the Sultan. The passages which are particularly objected to by these somolons of the Censorship are those relating to the restoration of the Jews to Palestine and the Kingdom of Christ. The phrases "Kingdom of Heaven," "of God," or "of Christ" must be omitted. The words "Jew" and "Hebrew" must be left out. The words "According to the law of the Jews" cannot be admitted because the Jews have no law separate from that of other rays in the Ottoman Empire. The reference to the "Queen of the South," contained in Matthew xii, 42, is for some reason, which is not apparent, ordered to be left out altogether.

A table of lessons issued by the Sunday-school Union has been for years used by the native Protestant schools of the Empire. The changes which have been made in this are amusing. The lesson from St. Luke iv, 14-21, must be struck out, because it speaks of the "liberty" of the Gospel, and the word liberty implies something offensive toward the existing Government. The sorrow changed into joy, as illustrated by the lesson from Jeremiah xxx, 7-10, is suppressed. It speaks of the return of the Jews from captivity, and there may be treason lurking in the lesson. Probably the same reasoning that is applicable to the word explains the rejection of the lesson from Psalm xxiii, 10-22. It is, no doubt, from a fulness of loyalty that the words, "Borrow in the Palace," as shown in Esther iv, to the end of the ninth verse, has not been allowed to pass the censor's eye. Both the lessons, if read, will perhaps suggest how they may appear to persons who are not acquainted with the first nine verses of the Book of Joshua. At any rate, the words "Fear not" as a heading must be omitted. In the same way the lesson which begins with the object allotted to it, is in the lesson from Romans iv, 21, to end, without having the nature of the charitable object clearly defined and shown to be one which does not conflict with the interests of the Ottoman Empire. St. Paul is speaking of a contribution for the poor in Jerusalem. One of the reasons that he gave for his contributions was that he had given to the poor in his home town, and that he might be pronounced better. Therefore, suppress it.

It is satisfactory to know, the correspondent adds, that when Sir Clare Ford pointed on the shoulders of the Jews, and other changes demanded after the lesson was given to him, his promise of redress at once made, if his complaints were on examination, found to be justified. The Amazons, no doubt, will doubt the master's cause, and not rest till his demands have received full satisfaction.

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